Met Office

NEWS

Get winter ready

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5.4 million households have been hit by costly winter repairs in the last 5 years.

Winter weather has caused damage to 5.4 million British households in the last five years, according to new data from the Met Office, with those worst hit suffering up to £5,000 worth of damage. But those repairs may have easily been avoided if householders took a few simple steps before winter, with new research of 2,000 British households pointing to the nonchalant approach many take to preparation for colder months – a fifth (23%) admitting to taking no steps whatsoever.

Despite boilers commonly breaking down around winter time and costing up to £1,000 to replace, two in three households with boilers (66%) said theirs had never been serviced. And in spite of recent hurricane-force winds, four in five households (86%) admit to never having checked the stability of the trees on their property, and 88% have never checked their roofs for loose tiles.

Looking at preparation for when temperatures drop, three quarters (75%) have revealed they are unsure if their pipes are insulated and safeguarded against freezing. This uncertainty corresponds to driving too, with two-thirds (62%) of car owners claiming to not own anti-freeze to prevent water turning to ice within their vehicles. The survey also shows that people don't see a need to prepare for heavy snowfall, with four fifths (81%) admitting they don't own any snow clearing equipment of any kind – that includes a shovel and bags of salt.

Storm Desmond and Eva flooded 16,000 homes during December 2015, the wettest December in a century, and yet many of us clearly haven't learnt from the devastating effects caused by flooding. The survey reveals that 96% of households admit they had no idea if they lived in an area at risk of flooding.

Caroline Nokes, Minister for Government Resilience and Efficiency said: "With winter approaching it's important to be ready for whatever the season might bring.

"Being prepared might mean making minor home or car repairs now before the weather changes, getting a flu jab if offered one or checking eligibility for winter fuel payments.

"Doing small things now can make a real difference to people's comfort and health during the winter months."

Derrick Ryall, Executive Head of Public Weather Services at the Met Office commented: "The recent 70mph winds generated by Storm Brian, and the flooding in recent winters, send a clear warning about the severe weather conditions this country experiences most winters. High winds, freezing temperatures or heavy rainfall can all have a big impact during winter, but we can all take some simple steps to safeguard our homes and possessions against them."

Surprising winter essentials Brits don't own

The lack of preparation around winter time extends beyond checks to homes and vehicles. Indeed, over half (51%) of those surveyed admitted to not having appropriate winter footwear, despite a third (33%) admitting they have fallen over as a result of icy conditions on pavements, and one in 10 claimed not to have a winter coat. A further 35% admitted to not owning a winter hat. Perhaps most surprising of all, despite the heavy quantities of rainfall Britain enjoys every year, a quarter (26%) claimed not to own an umbrella.

In the event of a power cut, some might be caught in the dark, with two in five households not owning any candles and a quarter (27%) not owning a torch. Although many might use their smartphones to light their way, a fifth said they do not own any kind of emergency charger for their devices – proving that candles and torches may in fact still perform a valuable function.

Derrick Ryall at the Met Office added: "People in the UK are resilient and severe winter weather is something we're all used to, so we sometimes underestimate its impact on our everyday lives. Our research shows that many people are too relaxed, however, and are confused about what they need to do to prepare. This is why we have created the comprehensive winter checklist, so that households can ensure they are fully prepared ahead of this coming winter."

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